



2016

# Marketing Plan

Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau





## A Letter From the President

The hospitality industry in Bloomington continues to dominate the metro area with the addition of our new hotels including the new brands of JW Marriott, Hyatt Regency, Townplace Suites by Marriott, Hampton Inn Minneapolis Bloomington West and Home2 Suites by Hilton, giving our visitors more choices to stay when visiting the Twin Cities.

The additional meeting space with the JW Marriott and the Hyatt Regency plus the space renovations of many of our existing hotels, gives our group sales department new product to offer meeting planners who are looking to bring their meeting or event to our city. Our on-line housing program and its successful track record is a welcome addition for our sports market planners who are in need of this service and we look for new growth in this area for 2016.

We are also very excited about the opening of the new expansion at Mall of America which offers new retail, restaurants and attractions giving travelers new reasons to return to the Mall and Bloomington.

Several signature events in 2016 such as the Ryder Cup and TBEX Convention, which is the largest gathering of travel bloggers and writers in the U.S., gives us new opportunities for marketing and promotions both nationally and internationally. Pre and post familiarization tours with potential new clients and increased media exposure will help position Bloomington "Center Stage".

The ongoing growth in social media and mobile marketing continue to be a key focus for us in reaching our visitors. The changing platforms of distribution within the meeting industry bring new opportunities for us to promote our brand and feature our hotels to new planners.

We believe the outlook is positive for 2016 and as always our team remains dedicated and enthusiastic about promoting Bloomington to the world.



# Sales





## Sales

Many changes have emerged in Destination sales with new technologies, digital sales platforms, continued rise of intermediaries and the arrival of the millennial planner. This has created an opportunity within each Bloomington CVB market segment to utilize technology and digital programs more than ever before. The Bloomington CVB goal for 2016 will be to continue to adapt these technological advances in this new digital environment and focus on driving destination preference at all levels. We will continue to engage with buyers and focus on integrated marketing communications to make sure we are in the consideration set when they are looking for events and meetings to hold.

### Strategies:

- Focus on digital meeting procurement platforms and increase our data capture to drive our value proposition of Bloomington as a place to hold your meeting, and to remarket for future business
- Increase one-to-one marketing efforts, webinars and list purchasing to drive new leads to our hotels
- Utilize more social media to engage millennial buyers through digital channels highlighting Bloomington as a place to hold your meeting or event
- Expand our partnership with Conference Direct, American Express and HelmsBriscoe to gain more exposure as a place to hold your meeting and event
- Focus on our “Sports Central” brand and grow all sports vertical markets
- Participate in industry tradeshows to create higher awareness of our destination
- Partner with Explore Minnesota, Meet Minneapolis and Visit Saint Paul to cooperatively market the region at select trade shows and through event sponsorships



## Sports Market

The sports market continues to grow in our destination due to the popularity of Mall of America and the addition of new facilities to the area. We have tremendous opportunities to showcase Bloomington over the next few years by hosting several events very large in scale. Through strong sales efforts, we have seen significant growth in our housing program which has increased bookings in the sports market.

Action sports are a current trend in the sports market and are popular with the millennial audience. With current venues, parks, and facilities in Bloomington, there is a good opportunity to grow this segment.

### Strategies:

- Create a newsletter for potential clients showcasing venues in Bloomington that would appeal to action sports
- Continue to build our relationships with Three Rivers Park District, Minneapolis Ski Club and Mall of America to build brand awareness for our destination and secure key events for Bloomington
- Continue to add content, point of view (POV) videos and updates to the sports section of our website with an emphasis on the millennial audience
- Promote our online housing program to both new and existing clients to provide additional value for both parties and to differentiate us from our competitors
- Remain as the key contact for securing current and ongoing accommodations for the 2016 Ryder Cup, 2016 US Figure Skating, 2018 Super Bowl, 2019 NCAA and represent Bloomington on different subcommittees to increase exposure in Bloomington





## National Association Market

The Association Market continues to have strong room nights with favorable patterns for Bloomington. The opportunity for Bloomington to secure national and regional association business is good with our mix of hotels and partnership with Meet in Minnesota and American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). Rising costs related to hosting conferences remains a trend and many national and regional associations require the local chapter in the chosen destination to provide financial and staff support. Showcasing Bloomington as a value destination with free parking and free shuttle to/from the airport make us a more desirable location.

### Strategies:

- Acquire new national association clients through attractive offers in select focus markets and regions
- Explore sponsorship opportunities with Associations to help offset the rising costs of conventions and secure their business for our destination
- Continue to utilize our partnership with eRFP website; CVENT, Star Site, Meeting Evolution to drive influence for our destination
- Capitalize on any opportunities with our Meet in Minnesota partnership with ASAE



## State Associations

The State Association market is an active market for Bloomington and many State Associations like our destination as a place to provide quality education and events for their associations. Events typically occur on a three year rotation and many look for multi-year commitments. Many Association Management Firms now influence the decision process, as well as Third Party planners. The Association Management Firms (i.e., Ewald) manage all aspects of the association and we will continue to focus our strategies on these new influencers.

### Strategies:

- Host face to face industry events with new Millennial Planners and our hotels to educate them about Bloomington products and CVB services
- Utilize the 2015 State Association partnership survey, that focused on hosting regional or national meetings in Bloomington and highlight need periods of our hotels
- Conduct strategic social media campaigns with planners on new trends in association management and highlighting Bloomington hotel product and BCVB services to assist in securing their group business
- Partner with Ewald Consulting on future opportunities to showcase our Online Housing Program as an event management tool



## Government Market

The Government Market continues to show a slight increase with State Government agency meetings for our destination. The government per diem rate for our area increased to \$140.00 for the new fiscal year, an all time high since 2010. Government planners are not as focused on digital platforms, so more traditional communication of phone calls, mail and email is important to solicit this market segment.

### Strategies:

- Develop Quarterly mailings to highlight the positive government per diem, our new hotels and hotel renovations
- Communicate our value added amenities available to groups by utilizing our convention services
- Partner with Society of Government Meeting Professionals ( SGMP) local chapter and host educational events highlighting the favorable government per diem and brand awareness of Bloomington
- Utilize the Bloomington Destination video at select SGMP events to build awareness of our destination and drive RFPs for this market segment





## Corporate Market

The corporate market is a strong market for Bloomington given our close proximity to the airport and mix of hotels. The use of electronic Request for Proposals (eRFP's) to source hotels and venues has grown exponentially in recent years. DMO's and hotels need to respond to leads faster and the volume of eRFP's has shortened the time required to respond.

The corporate meetings market is also seeing an influx of energetic Millennial professionals entering the market place. The Bloomington CVB will continue to work with these new planners to build relationships and influence decisions and considerations for future locations for events or groups.

### Strategies:

- Continue to utilize partnerships eRFP website; Cvent, Star Site and Meeting Evolution for marketing purposes to drive preference for our destination
- Monitor eRFP's sourcing method to connect with the meeting planner to establish relationships and provide expertise about the destination
- Ensure the meeting planner receives a timely response to the eRFP by working with our hotels
- Become a mentor to millennial planners within the MN Chapter of Meeting Professionals International to forge relationships and gain key learnings on the needs of this next generation of planners



## Religious Market

The religious market has shown to be a strong market for Bloomington given our value proposition and mix of hotels. Free parking, free hotel shuttle service to/from Mall of America and the airport is a favorable selling point. Community outreach programs are becoming a trend with these groups and a majority of these religious organizations are focusing on becoming more engaged with charities by conducting community service projects that are beneficial to the city.

### Strategies:

- Communicate the availability of our hotels “need periods” and promote through one-to-one email campaigns and at select faith based tradeshow
- Promote our established community outreach programs with Bridging, Cornerstone, VEAP ( Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People) for ease of planning a community service project to faith based groups
- Co-host an onsite event at Religious Convention Management Association and Rejuvenate with Minnesota Partners



## Group Tour Market

Group tours can be a valuable market in our sales strategy. The potential volume created by receptive operators make them highly desired in our group efforts. In addition, the customers they generate result in longer length of stays and spend more dollars on dining, attractions and shopping. Building and growing our receptive operator relationships is key in growing this market segment.

Opportunities to create more experiential itineraries for groups will focus on craft breweries, unique shopping, interactive dining and one-of-a-kind behind the scenes experiences. With receptive operators bringing in the largest amount of trackable room night bookings, a key strategy will be to build relationships and focus on approximately seven large key operators to secure more hotel inventory and increase room night bookings.

Bloomington's variety of hotel product and rates, free motor coach parking, Mall of America and beautiful parks and nature continue to make our destination popular for domestic and international tourists.

### Strategies:

- Launch and promote newly created metro area Experiential Tourism programs
- Create new itineraries using light rail and today's trends of craft breweries, shopping and experiential tourism
- Participate in beneficial key sales missions with Great Lakes USA
- Work with top receptive operator companies to provide education to our hotels on current trends and benefits of receptive partnerships
- Increase our reach in Canada, focusing on Winnipeg, thru targeted promotions
- Partner with Mall of America to grow efforts in the emerging Filipino, Mexico and South American tour markets
- Collaborate with Explore Minnesota Tourism and industry partners to increase our presence at trade shows and with primary group associations like National Tour Association, American Bus Association and Travel Alliance Partnership, etc



## Wedding Market

Bloomington is in love with weddings! Twin City couples spend on average \$28,265 on their wedding with approximately 223 guests, creating an opportunity for excellent weekend business. The Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage in 2015 provides an opportunity for additional wedding revenue for our hotels. Couples who are searching for unique ideas to customize their wedding often search online and these couples are finding inspiration allowing them to personalize their wedding celebrations. Most themed weddings reflect their interests and traditions, focusing on creating a memorable experience for their guests. With 40 hotels we offer a variety of options for the custom wedding they desire, and the addition of the new JW Marriott and Hyatt Regency, will also allow us to attract additional luxury weddings.

### Strategies:

- Participate in the luxury brand UNVEILED Wedding Event which targets household incomes of more the \$105,000
- Partner with the Perfect Wedding Guide at a GOLD level sponsor to gain more market recognition and access to newly engaged couples through the GOLD level sponsorship database
- Advertise with the GLBT community to attract their business
- Collaborate with hotel wedding coordinators and event planners to increase referrals through networking and knowledge of our services
- Enhance our Wedding webpage to show diversity, creativity, unique experiences etc.



## Military Market

The Military Reunion Market continues to be a sustainable market for Bloomington. Our partnership with YMRC (Your Military Reunion Connection) Marketplace tradeshow and BMR (Book My Reunion) website continue to produce solid leads for Bloomington hotels. Our Simply Central message and our diverse reunion friendly hotel product make Bloomington a great destination to host reunions.

### Strategies:

- Plan a Destination Review for YMRC
- Attend Key Tradeshows to solicit new business for Bloomington
- Create additional visibility for Bloomington by partnering on the RFN (Reunion Friendly Network) monthly radio broadcast to reunion planners
- Strengthen relationship with BMR to continue growth in larger hosted reunions in Bloomington



## Online Housing

Our online housing program continues to grow with planners who want to provide a housing component for their meetings. In addition to new accounts, we have received several referrals from existing clients based on the positive reputation of our model and our team. The national trend for housing in the sports industry is that more events are utilizing a housing program due to the many benefits they provide, which positions us nicely for growth.

### Strategies:

- Continue to focus on “large scale” events and meetings that will have a significant impact on our housing program for Bloomington
- Promote our online housing services to other local DMO’s that are required to provide housing for new events they are bidding on or hosting
- Through our successful housing program and proven case studies, promote this program to other vertical markets through tradeshows, sales calls and webinars, driving incremental new opportunities for Bloomington





## Convention Services

Convention Services is an essential component of our selling process to market our destination. We provide services prior to the groups arrival by connecting attendee with our online tools and through our website. During their stay we provide collateral material and offer welcome hospitality services. Upon departure, a survey is deployed to group attendees to ensure their experience was positive and also provides us the ability to stay connected with planners to rebook future business.

### Strategies:

- Continue to promote our successful welcome hospitality services to our clients
- Promote the Bloomington website to planners to generate attendee engagement and provide information
- Encourage planners to utilize the Bureau online media gallery to promote our destination to their attendees
- Through our partnerships with our local charitable organizations such as: Bridging, Cornerstone, VEAP and Companies to Classrooms we add value to organizations looking to build a community outreach program during their event
- Remain as the key contact for servicing for the 2016 Ryder Cup, 2016 US Figure Skating, 2018 Super Bowl, 2019 NCAA and represent Bloomington on different subcommittees to increase exposure for Bloomington



# Leisure





## Leisure Market

Bloomington's desirable location for leisure visitors continues to grow, due largely in part to our hotel development and Mall of America expansion. The BCVB is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the city of Bloomington, representing hotels, restaurants, key area attractions and our gem, Mall of America. Visitors come predominantly from the upper mid-west 12 state region and neighboring Canada, however, strong interest continues to develop with emerging key U.S. cities and international markets. Tax-free shopping, our nature, parkland and outdoor recreation plus access to vibrant arts, theater, major sports and special events are strong drivers for Bloomington. Location, convenience, value and brand choices contribute to Bloomington's steady growth.

It is important for us to continually understand the changing travel landscape and keep pace with technology, social media and customer behaviors, including new initiatives to attract Millennials and build upon our overall destination marketing strategies. Our strong core base of family, couples, youth and adult sports travel and shoppers remain a key focus. With the Mall of America expansion of new retail, hotel and event space it will allow for new and unique marketing promotions and new attractions in 2016 will also offer visitors a new experience at Mall of America.

National events in 2016 including The Ryder Cup at Hazeltine National Golf Course and TBEX – the largest social media marketing and press conference in the U.S. - will bring new global awareness and opportunities to showcase Bloomington.



## Leisure Market

### Strategies:

- Focus marketing to drive results in website traffic, leads to hotels, customer acquisition and social engagement
- Maximize opportunities to drive consumers to Bloomington hotel brand websites for direct bookings
- Utilize Native Advertising to create messaging that looks and feels like content and geographically targets to content channels such as shopping, travel, family, etc.
- Produce a half hour TV segment in second season of The Minnesota Traveler show on Fox Sports North and Fox Wisconsin, key geographic area's for Bloomington
- Continue to build our photography and video library assets that portray Bloomington's vibrancy, booming city and unique style
- Produce Bloomington/Mall of America Visitor Guide jointly with Mall of America in print, digital and app versions
- Maximize our cooperative marketing opportunities with Explore Minnesota Tourism, Metro CVB marketing programs and BRAND USA
- Leverage BCVB and Mall of America call center operations to refine data management as well as optimize call center representatives to drive customer engagement, sales and visitor inquiry fulfillment
- Develop new package offerings for niche markets including single parent moms, millennials and ski enthusiasts



## Leisure Digital/Social

### Strategies:

- Cultivate new eCRM promotions and serve relative content through email promotions integrated across all social media channels
- Develop segmented campaigns that cater to the needs of visitors at every stage in their travel planning
- Integrate Bloomington hotel content and links into itineraries, articles and dedicated promotions
- Produce inspirational and experiential content with greater use of photography and video to continually enhance responsive design website
- Optimize our website events calendar with images and event details for new customer engagement and search results
- Implement aggressive program for customer acquisition
- Produce social media promotion in tangent with TBEX conference in June, 2016
- Utilize industry experts and services for social messaging, tracking, optimizing and hotel lead generation
- Leverage Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn for groups and special event opportunities
- Align social strategies with Mall of America
- Increase hashtag traction for #InBloom



## Partnership Programs

Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau partnerships contribute to our overall marketing initiatives. Our strong partnerships connect hotels, attractions, restaurants and corporations to valuable customers and support and expand our marketing reach.

### Strategies:

- Create new promotional ad placement opportunities on Bloomington website. Include social and digital opportunities to add value and drive results to partnerships
- Continue to bring new partners for Bloomington signature events including: Diamond Service Awards; Bloomington CVB Foundation Golf Tournament; Online Housing Program and Destination Reviews
- Partner with local sports venues to cross-promote Bloomington and national events for 2016-2018
- Explore mobile partner advertising platform opportunities
- Research a Virtual Visitor Center to engage local tourism businesses through automatic dialing, reservations and address look-ups on mobile devices





## Packages

The Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau package program is a great option for travelers looking for a one stop shop for their travel experience. Guests are able to secure their air, lodging and attractions conveniently from our website and call center.

Trends in packaging vary, and while package sales are still robust and offer bundled savings, a decline in hotel inventory due to a healthier economy drives less of a need for hotel discounting. Another trend is the increased number of Millennials entering the market, and they tend to check ten or more sources before making any bookings.

### Strategies:

- Use complete package offerings as give-a-ways in our sweepstakes drawings
- Create more customizable packages
- Utilize Facebook, TripAdvisor and key third party sites for package distribution
- Increase email communications with package specific messaging
- Research bundling tickets with traveling exhibits/events



## The Big Ticket / Attraction Pass

The Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau (BCVB) is the only Convention & Visitors Bureau in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area that offers a bundled attraction pass. The Big Ticket provides guests easy access to discounted admissions at six Mall of America and Twin Cities top attractions.

### Strategies:

- Launch new ticketing software to allow for mobile redemption and additional flexibility to grow attraction partners
- Implement a training and incentive program for participating attractions and hotel partners
- Work with third party OTA's to generate etickets and sales
- Create a new video on The Big Ticket to use in ongoing marketing efforts
- Research an online "Chat" option for current and potential attraction pass consumers that includes 24/7 customer care
- Maximize call center resources and selling capabilities



## Public Relations

The Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau places a high emphasis on obtaining earned media which promotes our destination. We focus on generating sharable content, story ideas and itineraries for travel writers, social influencers and journalists. New distribution channels will give us greater access to monitoring and building our media relations.

### Strategies:

- Leverage opportunities and promotions surrounding our hosting of the prestigious TBEX convention – the largest gathering of travel writers
- Maximize Meltwater News to distribute stories across traditional and social channels
- Enhance over all social media integration including Instagram and Pinterest for planning and sharing visitor experiences
- Monitor and provide continuous content for third party partner sites, including: TravMedia; Meltwater; U.S. Cultural Heritage; Shop America; Cross Border Shopping; Explore Minnesota; AliShops; Mall of America; Trip Advisor; Orbitz; China Business Network, etc
- Add and build upon existing photo and video library
- Pursue local angle and utilize photos from local events and attractions for our marketing push including social media, website and building Bloomington's #InBloom hashtag
- Develop contests and special social media promotions to gain user generated photos/videos and encourage customer engagement



## Signature Events

### Diamond Service Awards

- Honors and recognizes front-line service employees for excellent customer service in the hotel, restaurant and retail industries in Bloomington
- 20th Year Grand Celebration

### Bloomington CVB Foundation Golf Tournament

- Industry Relations & Education Scholarships

### TBEX International Conference - World's largest gathering of travel bloggers, writers and media content creators

- Social Media

### 100th Year Celebration of National Parks

- The National Park Service Centennial Challenge is an opportunity to match (at a minimum of 1:1) federal dollars with partners to accomplish projects and programs at national parks

### Ryder Cup 2016

- Golf's premier event at Hazeltine National Golf Club Sept. 27 - Oct. 2



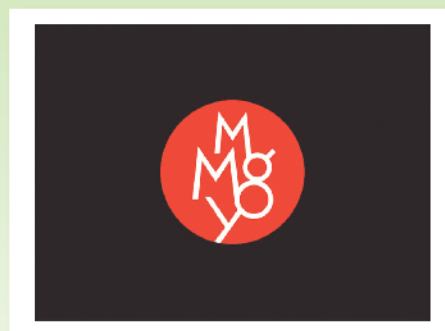
## International Marketing

Canada, United Kingdom, China, Germany, France and the Nordic Countries continue to be the top international markets for Bloomington. As a partner of Brand USA, we will also market to new Latin America destinations such as Brazil and Mexico. In addition, the 2016 Ryder Cup is an opportunity to showcase Bloomington for pre and post tournament golf vacations. The increase in the Icelandair flight schedule will help to increase hotel room night bookings in 2016.

### Strategies:

- Develop new strategies to focus on the top Receptive Operator programs for Bloomington to increase hotel room nights
- Market new group Signature Experiences created for Bloomington and Mall of America through website landing pages, itineraries, cross promotions and destination reviews
- Use social media to share updates and experiences for our media and tour operators destination reviews
- Position Bloomington with our representation firms, Cellet Travel Services, China Network and Atlantic Link to keep Bloomington as a top option for International travelers
- Continue to support Brand USA marketing efforts in emerging countries such as China, Brazil and Latin America countries
- Target promotions to international travelers for pre and post golf tours as part of the Ryder Cup 2016

## Sources





## Meet the BCVB Team



**BONNIE L. CARLSON**  
President & CEO

## Sales



**DAN O'NEILL**  
Vice President of Strategy  
& Sales



**TODD LEHRKE**  
Associate Director-Sports  
Development



**TAMMY BARNUM**  
Sales Assistant



**ROSE DUDYCHA**  
National Account Manager



**TONY COOK**  
Sales Manager & Online  
Housing Manager



**JULIE GIORGIO**  
National Account Manager



**SUSAN BREEN**  
Convention Services Coord-  
inator



## Meet the BCVB Team

### Marketing



**JAN KROELLS**  
Vice President  
of Marketing



**JOELL MORIN**  
Online Marketing &  
Project Manager



**DINO LOBAIDO**  
Partnership Sales  
Manager



**SHERRI MULLERY**  
Vice President of Business  
& Foundation Partnerships



**PAM JOY**  
Events, PR & Group  
Travel Manager

### Administrative



**LORI REBERS**  
Assistant Finance &  
Administration Manager



**LINDA MALMSTEDT**  
Receptionist



**LISA CONNELLY**  
Online Housing  
Manager



**EVE CAHOON**  
Finance Manager



**JANICE MACHAU**  
Receptionist



**CARMEN THOMPSON**  
Online Housing  
Coordinator



**BLOOMINGTON CONVENTION  
& VISITORS BUREAU**

7900 International Drive, Suite 990  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55425

**BLOOMINGTONMN.ORG**